

The FRONT PAGE

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Serving the Carolinas' Gay & Lesbian Communities for Over Eighteen Years

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"Equality Begins At Home" Project Plans Events In 50 States

■ Planning underway for "Equality Begins At Home" to be held in March.

Organizations in North and South Carolina are joining in a nationwide effort to promote legislation for equality and justice for gays and lesbians in all 50 states.

The Carolinas will take part in "Equality Begins at Home," an effort coordinated by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations. Organizers hope to hold events in all 50 state capitals, March 20-27.

Organizers believe "Equality Begins at Home" will draw national attention to efforts to pass hate crimes legislation and other laws favorable to the gay and lesbian community.

Equality NC PAC, formerly NC Pride PAC, is organizing the event in North Carolina. MK Cullen, director of the PAC, is coordinating the effort in Raleigh, where she is also monitoring legislation before the General Assembly.

The South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement is coordinating that

state's effort in "Equality Begins at Home." Events are being planned to take place in Columbia, said Tony Snell, president of SCGLPM. (See related story, p. 1)

According to the organizers, the state events will be planned so that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people can participate in simultaneous events nationwide, most of which will take place at state capitals. These actions will, among other things, build support for hate crimes law, ban employment discrimination, provide for safe schools for all students, ensure the right to adopt and

become foster parents, and address health issues including HIV/AIDS.

As part of its coordinating efforts, the Task Force provided Federation member groups \$5,000 each to support their "Equality Begins at Home" organizing efforts and hired a national coordinator for the event. Dozens of national organizations have signed on in support of this week of action.

"Equality Begins at Home is not an end point but a beginning point. We are going to make our statewide organizations stronger, mobilize more people, register more voters, and demand greater accountability from our state legislators and policy makers," stated Kerry Lobel, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director. "It is this organizing at the state level that will ultimately counter the hostility and gridlock we have come to know from our nation's capital," she added.

Never before in the history of the gay rights movement has there been a coordinated political campaign of actions in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia

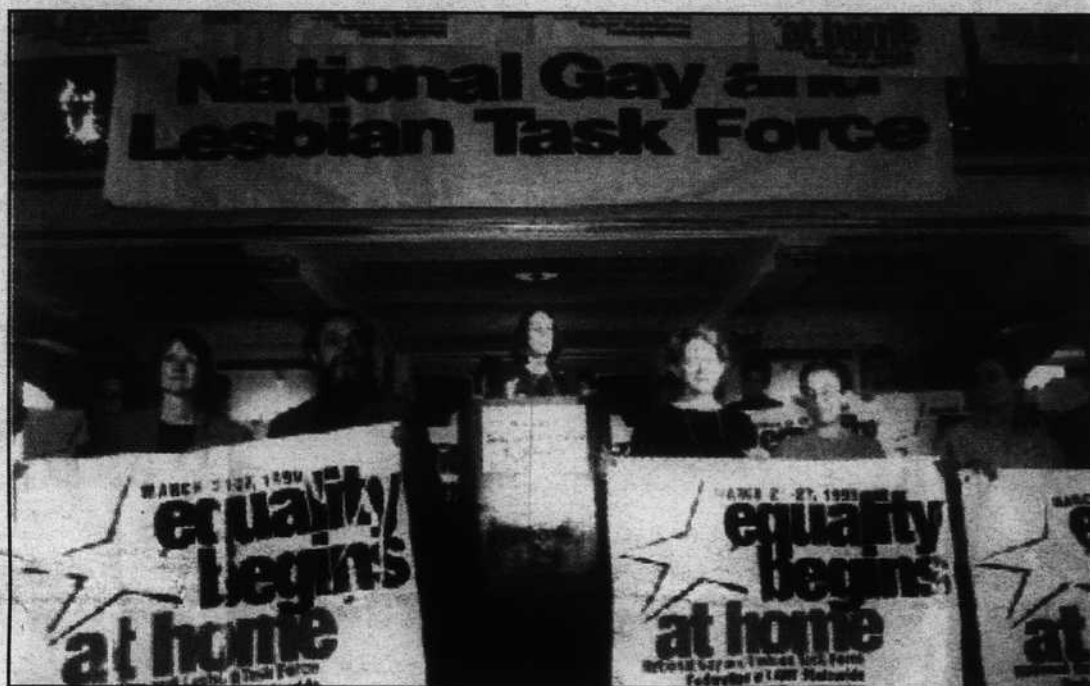
and Puerto Rico. The vast majority of debates and decisions about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender equality occur in state legislatures.

Organizers hope that "Equality Begins at Home" will bolster the infrastructure of the movement within the states, and lead to greater success in the overall struggle for equality.

Each state organization will develop events to highlight priority issues:

- In California, activists will focus on defeating an anti-gay ballot measure to be put before voters next year. Events will include a rally and youth lobby day.
- In New Hampshire, activists will hold a rally at the state capitol

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Kerry Lobel, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director announcing "Equality Begins At Home" at the NGLTF's Creating Change conference in Pittsburgh last November. More than 1500 people were in attendance.

St. Patrick's Parade To Include Gays, Lesbians

By Paul Lee
Senior Staff Writer

New York City Mayor Rudy Guiliani and other New Yorkers have often criticized South Carolina for its political and social conservatism.

But gays and lesbians in Columbia are being granted a privilege that homosexuals in the Big Apple have been denied for years: the right to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

The S.C. Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (SCGLPM) had asked permission to participate in the March 20 event, but the request was initially denied because the gay rights group was considered a political entity with a political agenda, said SCGLPM

President Tony Snell.

Organizers of the St. Patrick's Day parade and the pride group reached a compromise. Members of SCGLPM will be allowed to march under the banner of the Carolina Rainbow Family Coalition, the group's educational and charitable sister organization. The Coalition operates a community center and focuses on youth-oriented programming.

However, the gay and lesbian marchers at the St. Patrick's Day parade won't be completely devoid of symbols. The group has permission to carry the rainbow flag and another flag with a pink triangle, emblems of the homosexual community.

The Coalition will also carry a banner with the slogan, "Equality

Begins at Home," which the title of an event coordinated by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations to promote equality and justice across the nation.

Scheduled for March 21-27, "Equality Begins at Home" is an attempt in every state to draw national attention to the crusade to pass hate crimes laws, civil rights legislation, supportive family measures, and to fight anti-gay initiatives at the state level.

According to Snell, SCGLPM will soon announce a specific schedule of events for "Equality

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